



CONGRESSMAN HENRY A. WAXMAN NEWS

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WAXMAN SPONSORS BILL TO PROMOTE TELEVISION DIVERSITY

WASHINGTON -- Legislation to promote diversity and competition in television programming was introduced today by Representative Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif) and more than 30 other House members.

Waxman's bill would keep in effect regulations adopted by the Federal Communications Commission in 1970 that prohibit the three television networks from controlling the re-run rights to the entertainment shows they broadcast.

Without such regulations, Waxman said, "the public will suffer a loss of diversity and competition. Independent, non-network affiliated stations no longer would have the same ability to compete for popular shows that enable them to be economically successful and to offer alternatives to network programming."

Among those joining Waxman, a member of the Telecommunications Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over the legislation, were Representatives Timothy E. Wirth (D-Col.), chairman of the subcommittee, and Carlos J. Moorhead (R-Calif.), a member of the subcommittee.

Waxman said the legislation was necessary because the FCC is hearing arguments on the rule "and seems predisposed to repeal it."

The regulations in dispute are known as the financial interest and syndication rules. The FCC promulgated them in 1970 after concluding that the "public interest requires limitation of network control and an increase in the opportunity for development of truly independent sources of prime-time programming."

At the time, the three networks, for all practical purposes, controlled the entire program production process. Because they could require producers to give them syndication rights, they also could control who could buy re-run rights.

"The FCC rule has made inroads into the network dominance," Waxman said. "The result is that since 1970 when it was put into effect, there has been a 26 percent increase in the number of independent producers, and the number of independent television stations has doubled.

"If the FCC repeals the rule and my legislation is not adopted, we are likely to return to the pre-1970 period when 97 percent of all evening television programs were controlled by the networks."

Waxman's legislation is supported by a broad range of organizations interested in better and more diverse programming including Action for Children's Television, the American Civil Liberties Union, Association of Catholic TV and Radio Syndicators, Children's Television Workshop, Citizens Committee on the Media, Congress Watch, Media Access Project, National Association on Television Violence, National Council of Churches of the United States and numerous state and local groups.